

Body, Mind & Spirit

QI GONG: USING AN ANCIENT CHINESE FORM OF EXERCISE TO DEAL WITH THE STRESS OF MODERN LIFE

Rushing to work. Fighting traffic. Putting in long hours. Feeling pressured, stressed, worn out.

Sound like your life? If so, you are not alone. For many of us, life today is hectic and frenetic. We may not be able to change the world we live in, but in the ancient Chinese practice of Qi Gong (pronounced chee-gong), we can find a way to reduce the stress-and wear and tear - of modern life.

"Qi Gong can bring a sense of peace and happiness to you, and help you feel more energetic," explained Holly Ann Alswel, a licensed acupuncturist in North Portland.

For thousands of years, Qi Gong has been a part of traditional Oriental medicine. Qi Gong consists of a repetition of simple, gentle exercises and may also include correct posture, controlled breathing and meditation.

"In Chinese, Qi can mean breath or air as well as vital energy, and Gong refers to discipline and hard work," Ms Alswel explained. "So Qi Gong is a way to draw vital life force into ourselves. It also is used in healing, and in my practice, I often use it to complement acupuncture treatments."

She went on to explain that there

are many styles of Oriental exercise based on the concept of vital energy and disciplined movement. Many of us are familiar with Tai Chi and other forms of the martial arts, in which an individual fights an imaginary opponent in slow motion.

"There is growing awareness of Qi Gong, the softer type of Oriental exercise, and how it can calm the brain and settle the heart, how it can promote relaxation as well as improve stamina and give one more energy and vitality," Ms Alswel said. "I think of it as personal physical medicine."

The beauty of Qi Gong is that anyone can learn and practice it, regardless of age or physical ability. In China, people do their Qi Gong exercises on busy sidewalks and in parks often before beginning their work day.

In Portland, the Oregon College of Oriental Medicine offers classes and has a special service for answering questions about Qi Gong. The number to call is 291-9570.

As a practitioner of Oriental medicine, Ms. Alswel sees the value of Qi Gong in many ways. "I think Qi Gong is good for older people, or those with disabilities, because they can go at their own pace. For addictions involving alcohol, eating or overwork, Qi Gong can ease the compulsions people

have, because that's not their inherent nature, it's not their true humanity."

In her practice and in her role as a teacher, she has observed that there are obstacles to persuading people to incorporate Qi Gong in their own lives, even when they recognize its value.

Ms. Alswel is sympathetic to those who find excuses not to try. She is pragmatic enough, however, to help her patients and students balance the ideal with the practical. "Ideally, if a person could do a half an hour of Qi Gong and 15 minutes of meditation every day for six weeks, I'd find it hard to believe they wouldn't find some pretty significant differences in their life."

In recent years, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of people seeking treatment from practitioners of traditional Oriental medicine. People have become aware of acupuncture and herbal remedies, the main modalities of traditional Oriental medicine. Now, more and more people are turning to Qi Gong, and using the graceful, calming movements and healthful benefits of this ancient form of exercise to increase their vitality and find a sense of peace and balance in a fast-paced and stressful world.



Holly Ann Alswel, a Licensed Acupuncturist in North Portland, practicing Qi Gong, a traditional form of Chinese exercise which promotes health and vitality.

Paul Von Ward: Author of Solarian Legacy

INTERVIEW BY JOY RAMOS

Paul Von Ward is a multidisciplinary and multilingual researcher and writer in the fields of new science and metaphysics, with degrees from Florida State University and Harvard. Paul uses the three-faceted model of the human (consciousness, subtle energy, and physical). He shows how the subtle senses and inner powers shape the nature of relationships, from the most intimate to the political.

Q: What is the "stuff" that the universe is made of?

Paul Von Ward: The whole universe comes out of the Universal Mind. It is also known as our Universal Consciousness (or the Grand Couple). That is from which everything else comes from. Anything we see, feel, hear and touch in the physical universe is only concentrations of that second thing we call subtle energy. There are a lot of words people use to describe the subtle energy fields. It's from the subtle energy field that you have this concentration of energy that gives us matter. The question is then, what shapes that subtle energy field to give us a physical object? Mind does the shaping. Consciousness does the shaping. Consciousness actually shapes the subtle energy field.

Q: How do you explain the phenomenon of Firewalking?

Paul Von Ward: In my mind, I want to feel my physical body off from being burned by fire. How do I do that? I have my subtle energy body and I have my physical body. In order to walk on fire, I have to do something to my physical body to make me impervious to those hot coals. I want to create my physical body in a way that doesn't get burned. And I

imagine the soles of my feet as having an extra layer of energy protection. The first thing that happens then is that my subtle energy body forms a layer around my feet like the aura. It's what physicists call 'virtual reality'. It's just there...just between nothing and something. And, then the subtle energy form is what is called the morphogenic field. This is best described in a study called "The Hundredth Monkey".

Q: Please explain "The Hundredth Monkey."

Paul Von Ward: On an island in the South Pacific, scientists were studying monkeys. They observed that on one island, the monkeys started washing their yams in the ocean. They did it to wash sand off. It made the yams taste better. Anyhow, they liked them. Then more of them started doing that. When about a hundred monkeys were practicing that, the scientists noticed that monkeys on a nearby island started doing the same thing. There was no communication between the monkeys on the different islands.

How then did they learn to do that?

The monkeys had an idea they all saw in their minds (washing the yams in the ocean). When enough monkeys did it, it became a morphogenic field. It became a subtle energy image that traveled throughout time and space. It's not limited by the physical senses so that the morphogenic field can be perceived by the monkeys on the nearby islands. They learned through the subtle energies a new behavior. This is how conscious images get passed on to other people through the subtle energy fields.

Chronic Pain and Magnesium Levels

One of the principles of naturopathic medicine is to treat the causes of disease rather than to suppress the symptoms, although sometimes it is necessary to do both at the same time.

To a naturopathic doctor, the danger of suppressing symptoms is that the underlying cause may be ignored and may result in even greater sickness.

Here is an example from research literature (1) on how low magnesium levels in the red blood cells can have an impact on chronic pain levels from diseases such as fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue and myofascial pain. Researchers now think this may be true for lupus patients, as well.

Chronic pain and fatigue are key components in all these conditions. Investigators have proposed that low magnesium levels may make patients even more likely to experience chronic pain, and even cause a low pain threshold in these disorders.

(Magnesium is found in green leafy vegetables such as spinach and kale, although therapeutic dosages of magnesium may require dietary supplements, as instructed by a qualified health practitioner.)

Ironically, the therapies used to suppress chronic pain in these diseases can create even further magnesium deficiencies, which in turn leaves the patients vulnerable to more pain. For example, the conventional treat-

ment for pain in lupus patients is the use of immune-system suppressants such as cortisone, which may exacerbate the low magnesium levels in the red blood cells.

The study's author further points out the tendency among clinicians to ignore magnesium levels and treat myalgia symptoms with cortisone and other immune-system suppressants, even though the risks of this type of therapy include loss of bone tissue, bone marrow suppression, osteoporosis, liver toxicity, and advanced development of cataracts. Additionally, several studies in the literature suggest that corticosteroid treatment may intensify a magnesium deficiency in these patients. This is not to say that

the use of medication for controlling the inflammation associated with lupus is not necessary, but it would be appropriate to investigate magnesium levels as part of the treatment plan.

This research demonstrates how suppression of symptoms not only leaves the cause untouched but actually can create more disease.

To learn more about how to treat chronic pain and the diseases that cause it, contact a licensed naturopathic physician listed in the Yellow Pages, or make an appointment at the clinic at Mt. Olivet Baptist Church, 8501 N. Chautauqua, operated by the National College of Naturopathic Medicine. Call 255-7355.

Firewalking for Personal Transformation

BY JOY RAMOS

When I was pregnant with my first child, I was encouraged by a friend to try Firewalking. She had recommended it so that I may get over my fear of labor and delivery pains. I declined her offer. The thought of crossing over a bed of hot coals was daringly outrageous, but alluring for the extremist in me.

Four years later, I decided to try it. My present life circumstances are different, but the intentions for doing a Firewalk haven't changed: to break through self-imposed limitations and get beyond my fears.

There were a group of us gathered at Sauvie Island for the Firewalk session. I sensed anticipation from others and my own growing. A lot of us understood the moment as a "potential" for personal transformation like a rite of passage. The debate still raged within me to go ahead

with this or back out suddenly.

Preparation by the instructors helped. They readied us to align our body, mind and spirit for the moment.

We headed outdoors to build the fire with cedar logs, stacking them high and including our notes detailing our personal fears. We threw them in as a symbolic gesture of inner release from beliefs that bind us.

It took several hours for the logs to burn down into coals. They were carefully raked out to form a searingly hot pathway burning at 1200 degrees Fahrenheit. The heat's intensity was too much for my face or hands to bear it for more than a minute. Crossing the fiery path required several steps on the red-hot coals.

The night was clear and the moon loomed large above us. We drummed together, tribally connected like Native

Americans preparing for a sacred ritual.

All I can see ahead of me were the glowing red embers emanating waves of heat and our instructor waiting on the other side with outstretched arms, ready to receive us with a warm embrace.

I asked how we would know when we're ready. For some of us, there would be a sign or just a "knowingness" to go forward.

I stood outside the fiery pathway, feeling my fears grip me. There were times like this where I've placed myself "on the edge" and forced to decide: give in to the fear or move beyond it.

An inner conflict raged. I closed my eyes and gently focused. There was a clearing in my consciousness like a peaceful settling in. An unspoken voice within me said, "It's Time." That was my sign to begin the Firewalk.

With each step, there was little feeling. My feet felt the rough contours of the coals, but not much else. I met my instructor on the other end in loving embrace. My mind was reeling in disbelief. I DIDN'T BURN! I was compelled to

walk again just to see if it was all real.

The courage to cross felt solid this time. Again, I closed my eyes and waited. The same calm confirmation came through and I went with it. This time, I sensed some heat, but not too noticeable. This must be what's known as "Mind over Matter".

A cooling energy circulated around my feet which kept me awake for many hours till daylight. I inwardly accepted the Firewalk as phenomenal even though my mind tries to reduce it to a subtle dream. From that experience, I've learned to allow myself to be as powerful as I want to be and disengage fears that come up. I deal better with inhibitions and insecurity with a detachment that's like observing a movie and knowing that it's just a grand illusion. For that lesson in Fear Management alone, the Firewalk experience was worth going through.

For your own Firewalking experience, contact Daniel Pharr and Ariel of "Wings of Fire" at (503) 224-3868 or view their website at www.firewalking.org.

OCOM Acupuncture & Herbal Clinic

Stressed out?

Want to Quit Smoking?

Affordable group treatments with acupuncture now available.

For information & schedule, call 254-3566

10541 SE Cherry Blossom Dr., Portland (by Mall 205)

A Service of the Oregon College of Oriental Medicine

Feel your best with

Naturopathic Medicine

Bringing low-cost naturopathic medicine to you for:

Asthma
Diabetes
High blood pressure
Menopause / PMS

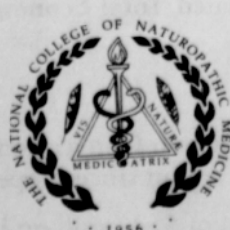
Allergies
Headaches
Colds & flu
Fatigue

NCNM

Natural Health Centers at

Mt. Olivet Baptist Church

8725 N. Chautauqua



1 - 5 p.m. Mondays and Fridays
Call for appointment; walk-ins welcome

255-7355

A teaching clinic of the National College of Naturopathic Medicine



Paul Von Ward
Author
of
"Solarian Legacy"

Metascience & A New Renaissance
Talk and Booksigning

Powell's Books on Burnside, 7:30 PM
Thursday, July 30th.